

Research Agenda
Charles Schlosser
Communication in Education

The role of communication in education was one of a small number of issues at the forefront as the field of instructional technology emerged from its origins in audiovisual instruction in the 1950s. Many influential contributors to the field at that time brought their interest in and study of communication from their academic “homes” in psychology, sociology, and mass communication. Indeed, the importance to our field of the study of communication is reflected in the name of its leading professional organization: the Association for Educational *Communications* and Technology.

The role of the study of educational communication went into a steep decline in the following decades. However, with the rise of new (primarily Web-based) instructional technologies and a significant shift in the field’s perspectives on the roles of teacher and learner has come, in the past few years, renewed emphasis on the role of communication in teaching and learning.

As a distance educator with a background in journalism and mass communication, I am interested in the role of communication in the distance education environment; not only communication between instructor and student (which was of primary interest to previous generations of researchers), but also communication among students. Some questions of interest are:

- How *much* communication is optimal?
- What *form* should the communication take?
- What is appropriate *timing* of communication?
- What causes variations in students’ desire for communication?